

Apollo's Lute



PALM BEACH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

APOLLO'S LUTE

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Palm Beach Community College





My Mother and Me, Me and My Mother

Let me care for you
My darling until I'm
Old and gray,
Folding your clothes
Washing your toes,
That get dirty in the
Day.

Let me care for you
My darling until I'm
Old and gray,
I will nurture you as
Long as you need. But,
As fast as you're growing,
As much as you're showing,
That won't be long indeed.

Let me care for you
My darling until I'm
Old and gray,

Although, the only thing I can
Do is sit and watch you
Play.

I can't care for you
My darling,
For, my age is starting to
Show. My skin is wrinkled.
My sight's a twinkle.
And my hair is starting to
Go.

Please, care for me now my
darling,
Now that I'm old and gray.
Come, fold my clothes, and
Wash my toes, until,
I go away.

ANGELA YVONNE TERRELL

LONE WOLF

A predatorial mammal
A hunter of great skill.
He devours his prey,
Yet he hungers still.

His ivory teeth straightly arrayed,
massive shoulders and powerful legs,
he stands tall.
A hollowed area in the earth;
only room for one he dwells.

He travels alone to find a mate.
He went to the water hole, gulp, gulp, gulp.
White foam base his upper lip;
delight incased his heart.

The sound in the air music of the land.
Boom-boom, Boom-boom
Sound of the drum
heart beat of the man.

Daintily before his eyes her presence appears.
Her aroma has arms; winter is near.
Her attention he skillfully commandeers
as he danced the dance of the lone wolf.

She felt awakened, bestirred, overmastered.
His hand touched her red flesh;
his fingers slide through her gleaming black coat.
Her mind relaxed; his words were amatory.

Her mate returns from a fruitless hunt;
he creeps from the dark.
The lone wolf and he stand chest to chest.
Violence, violence, violence, whine, whine, whine
The mate fled with his tail between his legs.

The sunrise, spring-time,
the early morning dew,
the cries of the she-wolf
The pups emerge.

Wilbur D. McNealy



SPINNING

circling wildly as a child, i never felt the dizziness in that
favored game

i could spin endlessly, abandoning myself to that pure act
the blurring world would whiz by in kaleidoscopic color and
somehow it seemed a perfect view of my fascinating
childhood

now

if my kids ask me to try it with them,
my inner ear mechanism render me nauseous and unsteady,
i stumble coming out of the spin..disoriented
it could be that physiologic fact
or maybe

i just don't want my life to go by so quickly
i want to savor and capture each frame
not missing a single detail.

as a child i had minutes i could give away
i could squander seconds
now i count each one
as special.

ELLEN J. DAVIS



Irish Music

Ancient
stone flutes
Floating
harp strings
What other plucking
knows this dance sound?
What other whisper
tells this sorrow?
REGINA DILGEN



Tides

of

.....

Love

my jealous lover
whose green is like the sea
churning angry waters
charting to engulf me.

distrust is the moon
silently manipulating all tides.

wrathful luminous eyes,
asking if i've lied.
dark clouds begin to gather
suspicious waves crash on the shore.
coldly stinging my body,
calling me a whore.

scorning words build the squall
brewing tempest of fear.
emotionally tossed, struggling to swim,
hoping the end is near.

never touched by a blow
and soon calm waters reappear.
rippling promises of regret,
love so sincere.

needy for love,
i have drifted too long.
living in a cresting siege,
deep down fathoming how wrong.

currents of love,
weigh me down.
i must swim through the flood
if not, is to drown.

Ronica Hardway



Erased

Lips ruby red, a captivating smile,
cheeks as plump as cherries
painted on the fairest of Limoges porcelain,
blue-green eyes of silent angelic laughter.

A gentle nine-year old beauty she was,
aching for the passing love,
that came only in tiny doled out parcels,
unexpectedly, unannounced,
laid upon her heart's doorstep.

In the heat of the afternoon sun,
her dancing skip lost its step,
as the red-brick home grew closer.
What would await her inside? - she knew not,
a hug, a kiss, a cupcake, or
a stony gaze, a sharp word, a bold hand,
cutting like knives into her soul.

Dark mahogany furniture looming over her
as navy curtains kept out the light.

"Hi, mom. I'm home from school."
"OK, do your homework, you know the rule."

A mother's pursed lips, clenched tight as a fist.
Dark circles, bedraggled look,
tired painfulness chiseled into stone.

Her small frame sat in quiet, oppressive stillness,
subtracting, adding, estimating, comparing,
pencil point becoming dull,
eraser leaving flakes of pink scattered over the page.
"Hurry up, finish your math," a harshness entered the room,
threatening, over-powering, big and dark the mother stood.
"Do it again, and do it right this time. Quit being lazy."

Cringing, flinching, the ugly fear of being hit again, and
maybe again.

"I'm sorry, Mommy, I'll do it right. I won't make a mistake."
She smiled a little smile, like a whimpering puppy,
but her lip quivered this time
and her cheeks were drawn as butter.

Her inner laughter changed to sadness
and the dance in her soul hid somewhere on the page
beneath the numbers she had just erased.

SUSAN BARROW



Souls of the Mist

**With what my eyes have seen
I can tell of discoveries
of oceans in the brilliant hues
of grey, emerald green, and blue
of ruins, tried and true.**

**When I climbed an crossed the stones
of someone's former home,
I thought how wicked is the sea
to sweep away such memories
of happiness and misery**

**All I really now know is
I never have to BE
anything but ME.**

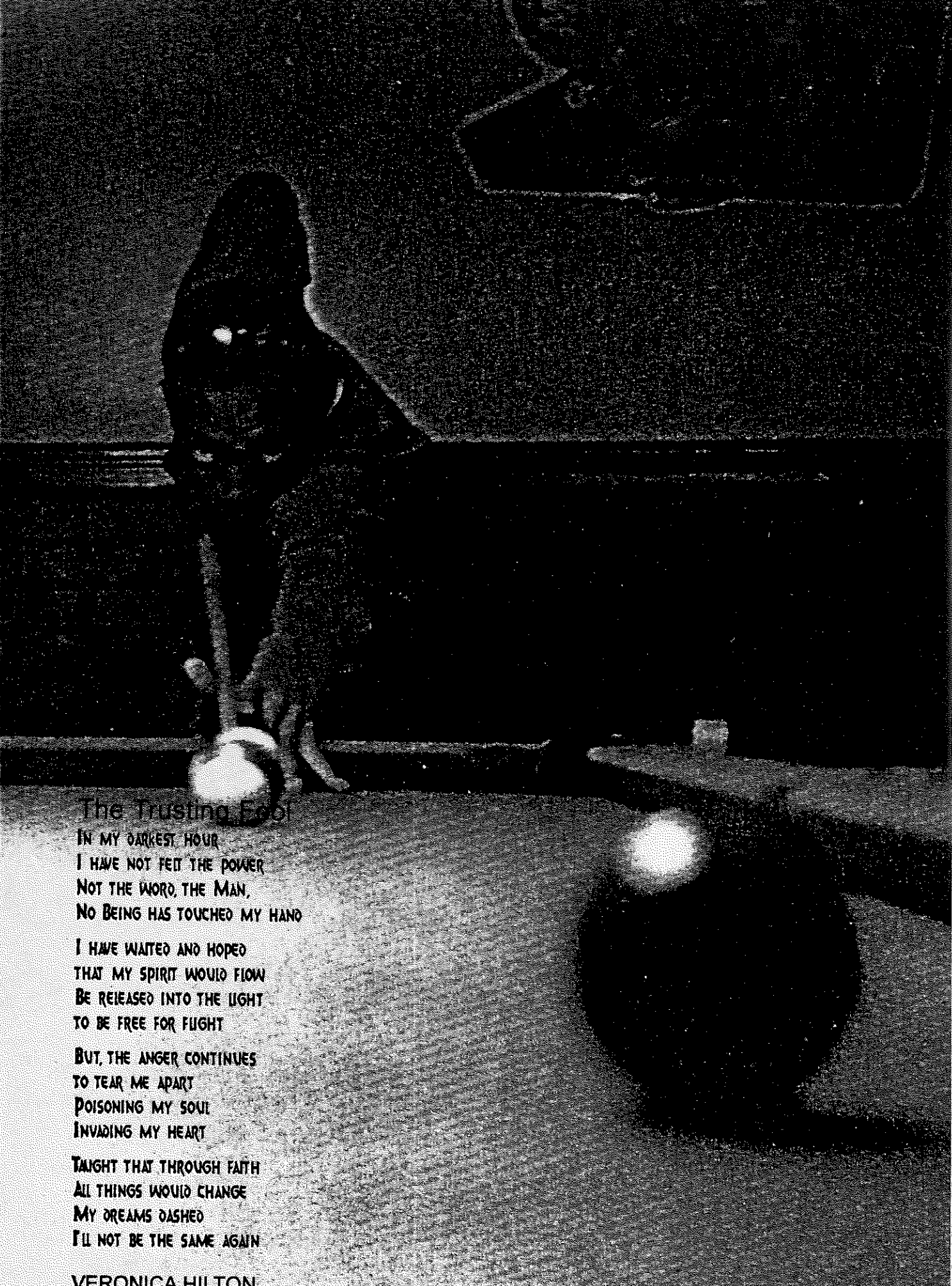
VERONICA
HILTON

Jennifer Sunrise

Darkness and the soft sound of Jennifer breathing, her in my arms, causes thought to evaporate. Orion stretches taut his bow and i am completely relaxed. Like a curtain slowly lifting, the eastern ocean turns pale, and shapes like towers and lines and all interconnecting splay out. My hand is around her waist and it feels like it has felt for centuries of man holding woman. Primal, yet tender. Thrilling, yet i cannot think. Like remembering a dream in reverse, the clouds spill out over the ocean, a heavenly horde of muted colors begin to show themselves, far-off and tantalizing. By looking in my companion's eyes i am undone, and so undone is the grasp, the hint of language. We are now living in a quiet world, but never silent. To demonstrate this, we both perform the sign-language alphabet to each other's satisfaction. Orion fades into a background land like mist. The clouds roil and tumble, change and churn. My head finds her shoulder, her legs, and i draw her close, needing to feel validated against such immensity. One pink-tipped cloud proudly announces what we hope to see, the sun. Marching across the southern half of the sky, a parade of misshapen animal clouds are drawn to the spot where the sun will arrive. Now nothing is said or can be said that's meaningful between us, tho' we try to talk. I want to warm her, to cuddle her, protect her against nothing in particular, against everything in general. I want her touch, too. The hint of daybreak flowers before us, and we are the only two followers of a just-created cult. Fishermen and joggers flow past us like we are flotsam washed up on the beach. I feel a sense of loneliness shared. My mouth finds her again and again thru all of this earthly display, and her kisses fill me, stretch my spirit up into the pale blueness of that patchy sky. I am alone, but with her. It's a delicate feeling, like the sunrise itself, somehow temporary... Knowing that eventually neither of us will be able to stare into the direct stare of that angry sun, when he arrives. I am not aware of my body directly, but instead by contact with my sunrise lover. I run my fingers thru her hair, i watch her freckled cheek, her darting eyes, i move my lips against her soft lips, and find myself in a painting with her, our bodies close, my hand on her breast, my legs against hers. The dutch sky reddens and yellow airy streaks beam skyward. The streaks trumpet, announce the coming sun. But the clouds furiously busy themselves to cloak him, as i to hold my good friend close. I'm lost. The sun does NOT arrive, though our kisses told it to. Weary, sleepy and somewhat silly, we walk as sunrise lovers back to our mundane buildings and thoughts...

ZEN SUTHERLAND





The Trusting Fool

IN MY DARKEST HOUR
I HAVE NOT FELT THE POWER
NOT THE WORD, THE MAN,
NO BEING HAS TOUCHED MY HAND

I HAVE WAITED AND HOPEO
THAT MY SPIRIT WOULD FLOW
BE RELEASED INTO THE LIGHT
TO BE FREE FOR FLIGHT

BUT, THE ANGER CONTINUES
TO TEAR ME APART
POISONING MY SOUL
INVADING MY HEART

TAUGHT THAT THROUGH FAITH
ALL THINGS WOULD CHANGE
MY DREAMS DASHED
I'LL NOT BE THE SAME AGAIN

VERONICA HILTON

I had that funky bondage dream again last night."

"Ooooh, Abby. The one with Brad Pitt in it?"

"Is there such a thing as a non-funky bondage dream?"

"Hold it. I don't think I've heard this one before, Abby. Someone fill me in."

That last comment came courtesy of David Weaver, the sole male and newest member of our carpool. Libby, of course, was happy to explain the situation to him. Sort of.

"See, she has this recurring dream about Brad Pitt..."

I had to either shut her up or shoot her, and the mood that I was in, shooting seemed perfectly reasonable.

"Not that dream, Libby. The one with the chains in it, oh blast it..." My hair was coming down. Again. Bess, the fourth accessory to our daily morning madness, took over. I was very glad she knew this story, as I couldn't have spoken at the moment. My mouth was full of the three hundred fifty seven hairpins it takes to keep my stubborn, shoulder-length mess of light brown personal hell off my neck.

"Since she was about eighteen, Abby has had this dream where she's tied down. There's clear shackles on her wrists and ankles and a clear chain around her waist, and there's music playing, something classical, Beethoven, I think, not that it matters..."

"Mozart" Libby interrupted.

"No, really. Are you sure? I was positive that Abby said..."

And they were off. David watched them go at it, his eyes crinkling. I find that extremely attractive. Who am I kidding? I find *him* extremely attractive. It occurred to me that he was trying not to laugh, for some reason. I

shoved the last pin into my head, stay there, dammit, and put him out of his misery.

"Go ahead, laugh at them. Everyone else does." I advised.

A huge grin lit up his face. Yeah, like it needs it. I smiled back. I had to. David Weaver's smile is the most contagious, infectious, irresistible thing I have ever seen, and that isn't just a personal comment. I have yet to meet the person, male or female, who can fend off that smile. It's better than Brad Pitt's any day. Just don't ever tell Libby I said that.

"Are they always this way?" he asked me.

I nodded. "Yeah, pretty much."

"And you've been riding together for HOW long?"

I added it up in my head. "Just under three years. And guess what? Not one of us has purchased a sidearm. Aren't you proud of us?"

He grinned again. "Oh, definitely. Models of self-restraint, all three of you." He took a sip of coffee. Thank God for Dunkin' Donuts. "So, what about this dream? Is it upsetting?"

"Why do you ask?"

He shrugged. "You don't seem like yourself today."

I made a face. "Result of living with my parents, I guess." I thought for a minute. "The dream, well I wouldn't call it upsetting, really. It's more...chilling. I wake up slowly, to hear all of this classical music playing, softly. I try to stretch, and it dawns on me that I can't move more than a few inches in any one direction. The music keeps getting louder..."

"Hold it." David raised one hand. "Is it Mozart or Beethoven?" he asked me pseudo-seriously. I had to laugh.

"Both, really. It's soft and like Mozart in the beginning of the dream, but as things progress, it gets more martial and imperious. Like Beethoven." I paused. I had been getting this particular dream more often lately, and seemed to be remembering more of it.

"So anyway, the music changes,

gets louder, and I start to struggle against the bonds. But it seems like the more I pull away, the tighter they get, until it's become really painful, it hurts me, it really hurts..." My voice trailed off. David was holding my hand, stroking my wrist. I looked at a question at him.

"You were holding it like it was injured," he explained. Oh. I looked to the front of the car to see two pairs of eyes watching me in the rearview mirror. Bess and Libby had apparently overheard that last exchange.

"I don't think you've ever been that detailed about it before, Abby." That was Libby, sounding concerned. "What's going on?" If she wasn't cracking jokes at my expense, she must be really worried. I just waved at her.

"Maybe I've got a guilty conscience and I'm dreaming of prison."

She laughed. "Oh, yeah? A prison where they play loud classical music?"

I shrugged. Bess spoke up, in her best academian voice. "Obviously, your subconscious mind is trying to tell you something..."

Libby rolled her eyes dramatically. "Thank you, Sigmund" she singsonged.

"Actually, dream interpretation is much more Jungian..."

And there they went again. Thank God for work. I love my friends, but mornings under any circumstances were not my favorite things.

So I'm working away, compiling data, entering data, saving data. Sounds much more interesting than saying that I type all day, doesn't it? I'd almost gotten over the rotten start to the day when here comes Libby, boogying through the door in her trademark scarlet high heels.

"Yes?" I asked, trying to arch one brow suggestively. Unfortunately, my glasses don't allow for a whole lot of 'arch' activity.

"Three things. One, I borrowed a book from Leslie in Accounting, did you know she was into this kind of stuff? Dream stuff? Anyhow, she keeps all sorts of useless stuff in her desk,

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and she happened to have a book on it. Look up your own sick thoughts. Two, the new club is supposed to open up tomorrow, and I think a group of us should go, I can count on you, can't I? Of course..."

"Wait a second, Libby. I'll have to get back to you on that."

She glared at me. "You know, you always say that, and you never do, NEVER! You are a horrible friend, why am I friends with you?"

"Because I improve your reputation." I answered sweetly.

"HAH!"

"What is thing number three, Libby?"

Her eyes began to dance. That is a sure sign of trouble where Libby is concerned. Usually my trouble. I swear I heard the theme music from "Jaws" begin to play inside my head.

"What is it, Libby?" I asked her carefully.

"Oh, I have got her attention now, don't I Miss-I-will-call-you-back-I-will-get-back-to-you, Miss why-don't-y-o-u-c-a-l-l-m-e-L-i-b-b-y, I'll-never-do-anything-with-you-but-we-are-such-good-friends-aren't-we?"

"LIBBY..."

"David Weaver has been asking everyone about you, my dear, and about your habits, he is making perfectly clear to anyone with a brain that he is interested in you, though when he finds out all the things I know about you..."

It was hard, but I made myself not react to her. That infuriates her beyond belief.

She gave up, throwing Leslie's book on my desk, and flouncing out of the room. In the doorway, she looked over her shoulder at me.

"By the way, don't think that I don't know how petrified you are right now, Abigail. I think this is going to be very entertaining, at least for me..."

As she left, she called behind her, reminding me to check the book.

David was talking about me? Asking about me? Unexpected. Nerve-racking, more like. I mean, I've known him for a while, sort of, but he had recently moved into our neighborhood, so with him riding with us every day I'd gotten to know him better.

By mutual agreement, the four of us take a later lunch. That way, we disturb fewer people when we get rowdy, which happens frequently. Also, this way, the lunchroom people don't have to threaten to kick us out. By the time this lunchtime rolled around, however, I was not really in a laughing mood. Leslie's book informed me that I had trouble with commitment and independence. What? Plus, thinking about the dream had made me uneasy, and I kept hearing snatches of classical music run through my mind. Plus, I had managed to work up a completely irrational panic about David. He's the kind of man you read about in Cosmopolitan magazine. He's smart, funny, gorgeous, well off financially, gorgeous. Nice, responsible, and gorgeous.

Good-looking people make me nervous. That's one of the things that I find so appealing about someone like Brad baby. I can fantasize plenty, but there's no risk. It's completely safe. I will never meet the man, so I will never have to fear that I will make a fool of myself in front of him. No apologies. No hurt.

But David... Oh, David is REAL and it seems like he really likes me, and I know that I like him, and this is really scaring me. What am I going to do?

So, I go down to the lunch room, hoping maybe he just won't show. Libby was already there, Bess was right behind me and I had just heaved a huge internal sigh of relief when an arm slid around my waist and David

was speaking in my ear. Thank God I have a decent waist.

"If I am going to be hanging out with you, you have to fill me in on all of your deep, dark secrets, you know..."

I looked up at him, faking amazement.

"I am innocent as a baby. I have no secrets, Mr. Weaver."

"Everyone has secrets."

"I don't."

"None?"

"Nope."

He mulled that over for a few brief seconds. I was enjoying this.

"How about psychoses?", hopefully.

"No.", regretfully.

"Hmmm." He pushed my glasses back up onto my nose.

"Past arrests?"

I had to laugh. He was beginning to look like a forlorn puppy, no mean achievement for a blond six-footer. We were at the table by this point, and he pulled my chair out for me, as if he'd been doing it for years. I stared for a second before taking my seat. Not counting waiters, no-one has ever done that for me before.

"So, basically, you're telling me that you are a well-adjusted female with no mental or emotional difficulties?" he continued. Before I could respond, there was Libby, eager to share her opinion. Her eyes were dancing, and I braced myself.

"No way. She has more problems than she admits to. She is completely neurotic about her parents, can't leave them, asks them before she does anything, and she doesn't even go out with us at night because she is, quote, needed at home, unquote."

David looked interested. Bess was giggling. I figured that this was shaping up to be a Pick-On-Abby lunch. Might as well get it over with.

"Needed at home, how?" David asked.

"Oh, she cooks and cleans, goes shopping. She's so good that sometimes I would swear little mice and happy bluebirds help her make her

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clothes."

OH, *that* stung. I had to protest. "Oh, come on, Libby, you know very well that my life isn't like that." She just stared at me, lips pursed and one black brow perfectly arched. I hate her sometimes, I really do. Why does that trick work for her, and not for me? I continued.

"It isn't. Really. Bess, stop laughing and back me up here!"

"Well, it isn't like they keep you under lock and key..." I raised my hands as if to say, I rest my case, but Bess hadn't finished yet.

"No, you do that to yourself."

My head swiveled towards her. "What?"

She and Libby high-fived. Oh, yes. That was certainly worthy of a juvenile salute.

"So you're saying that the problem isn't my parents, it's me?"

Bess nodded. "In a nutshell."

I shook my head. I couldn't believe this, it was surreal. "Oh, sure. Fine. I'm obviously mentally unstable and have simply never been aware of it until you enlightened me. How will I ever thank you?" I was really getting upset over this. I don't know why. Libby, Bess and I had always jibed at each other. It was part of the way we clicked, having similar senses of humor. Why was it bothering me today? I must be tired. That was all. Or maybe having this same discussion with my mother already today was affecting my mood more than I had realized.

David's turn. Great, now he was picking up their bad habits.

"Are you a Daddy's girl, Abigail?" he asked.

"No, she's a Mama's baby." Libby answered, grinning. Bitch. "The original domestic goddess in training."

David nodded. "Okay. So if I want to ask her out, I have to ask Mama?"

The both of them, my friends-Judas's, the pair- chorused in the affirmative.

"Hello, remember me? I'm the object of discussion here and I don't recall MY being asked about anything..."

"Why bother when you'll only say you'll get back to him?"

"If this is about tomorrow night, Libby..."

Sensing that this wasn't just fun anymore, David broke in.

"Whoa, ladies. Retire to your corners." He looked at both of us, sitting there with our arms crossed over our chests, glaring. "What's tomorrow night?"

Bess answered. "Tomorrow night there is a club opening up downtown. We had all heard about it and made plans to go together, but I guess Abby changed her mind?" She shrugged. "We were trying to get a group up to join us, but..."

David looked at me. "Are you going to go?"

"She has to ask Mama first." Libby sniped.

"That's it." I had it. I got up and left the table. I didn't want to sit with them any longer. Behind me, I could hear David telling Libby off, and I have to admit, I liked it. Today was not just me being sensitive. Libby was being much more stringent than usual, but why?

"Abby, come on back." David was holding out his hand to me. Libby sat there, looking mutinous. I just shook my head.

"I've lost my appetite." I said, and walked away.

The rest of the day dragged. It always does when you have something on your mind, doesn't it? And to top it off, that same music from my dream kept playing in my head, louder than before. I turned the radio up, but I

couldn't drown it out. Bah. Was I really a Mama's girl? That thought made me pretty uncomfortable. I mean, here I am, in my twenties, living at home. I *like* my parents, thought I realize that's rather rare. I don't have to ask them for everything. Forget that. I don't have to ask them for anything. I am a grown woman. Strong-minded. Independent. Capable.

Aren't I?

Needless to say, the drive home was not pure driving excitement. Libby muttered an apology. She glared at David when she did it, though, so I think he made her say it.

No-one spoke much. I think it was the quietest ride we've ever taken. David said that he'd call me when he got home.

I don't like this. I feel the way I did in high school, visible and uncertain, with everyone looking at me funny. It was the same feeling following me now. What was wrong with them all? Just because Scott Hendricks was THEIR dream date didn't make him mine. The fact that he was the ideal choice of every parent to take their daughter to the prom did not make me want to go with him. I did not throw away the chance of a lifetime, contrary to popular opinion, and it was my decision entirely. My parents had nothing to do with it. Nothing at all. Wait a second...

Mom was stirring something on the stove. It looked like flower petals. It probably *was* flower petals. My mother makes her own aromatic products. Usually, she uses her workroom, but she had just had it repainted, and so she'd invaded my kitchen. I usually do all of the cooking at home; I find it restful, and the kitchen is my sanctuary.

"Hi, honey. You're home later than usual." she said.

"That's because Libby drove slower." I answered. I know my voice sounded sour. I didn't mean to sulk. It just happened. Mom gave me one of those looks.

"Are the two of you on the outs

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again? Abby, I swear I don't know how the pair of you remain friends."

I made a face. "When she's human, we have quite a lot of things in common."

My mother started to chuckle. "And what about when it's you who isn't human, love?"

I just stared at her. This was getting out of hand. Was everyone in my life going to get on my case today?

"Is that supposed to mean something?" I snapped. "Are you going to start this argument again?"

She looked surprised. "What's the matter with you?"

"I don't think there's anything the matter with me!" I started pacing the room, pulling things out of cupboards just to give my hands something to do. "Libby's been on at me all day, you started in on me this morning, and David probably thinks I'm insane..."

She held up one hand. "Whoa. David Weaver?"

"Yes, David Weaver."

"Tall, blond, in my daughter's carpool David Weaver? That David Weaver?"

I was getting more irritated by the sentence. "Yes, Mom. *That* David Weaver."

"Oh, honey. He's CUTE."

I have never seen a look like that on my mother's face before. Hopefully, and with divine intervention, I never will again.

"Enough, Mother. We aren't even dating, don't start naming the grandchildren yet."

Before she could respond, there was a knock at the door. My kitchen runs pretty much the length of the house. It's all tile, floor to ceiling: custom cabinetry, a cook's dream. One wall is half windows, leading up to the door. Technically, it's the back door, but if defined by usage, it's our main entry. As I turned to look, I could see

through the windows that David was standing there.

It had begun to rain. He'd walked. My mother mouthed the words 'speak of the devil' to me, and shooed her hands to get me to let him in. I suppose I should. I don't want him to catch cold, after all.

It wasn't fair. He even looked good wet. BETTER wet. His greeting was a little wary, as if unsure of his welcome after this afternoon. He said hello to my mother, who flirted with him, grinning at me. I wanted to sink through the floor. I swear the woman purred. And, then, as if matters needed to worsen, she walked slinkily out of the room, offering to leave the two of us alone. Suicide was beginning to look like my only option, until I looked up and saw that David's eyes were crinkling.

Laughter really is the best medicine. He looked around the kitchen, as if to try to read my personality, picked up the cans from the counter.

"You're making something with..." he checked his left hand "...Italian tomatoes and ..." he looked at his right and blanched. "Maine blueberries? Uh, I guess you're an inventive cook. This was for your dinner?"

"For temper, more like."

He waited for an explanation.

"Everything has been fine for years." I said. "I have my routine, I have my friends, I have my job. I take advantage of my opportunities when they arise, I'm single, I'm smart. Why am I so, so *twitchy* lately?"

I had started pacing again, and couldn't look at David. I could, however, feel his blasted blue eyes following me around the kitchen. "It must be YOU. You're the only new addition to my life."

He had the nerve to grin at me. "Am I a new addition to your life?"

"Do you want to be?" Damn. I can't believe that just came out of my mouth. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean that..."

He was still grinning. Amazing.

"Aside from running down the street howling that I really, really, REALLY want to go out with you, I don't know how to be more obvious."

I know that my mouth was gaping open. I could feel it. Could I close it? No way.

He walked over to me, very slowly. He has such a sexy walk... His eyes never left mine.

"Brown sugar hair..."

"That never behaves itself..."

"Dark chocolate eyes..."

"That can't see ten feet..."

"Perfect size..."

"HAH!" I had to snort at that one. "Are you feverish?"

"Abby, why are you backing away? I'm not going to do anything to hurt you."

Was I backing away? I felt the counter behind me. Oh. I guess I was.

"I'm a little, uh, nervous?" I hazarded.

He moved again.

"Abby, I like you very much. I'm unbelievably attracted to you, but I have to know: is it reasonable to think that you are ever going to let me in? You seem to be attracted to me, too, but every time I try to come up with something, you always stay away. Tell me, okay? Is it me?"

Wait a minute. What just happened here?

"You? No, David, no. It isn't you...I mean, I just have things to do... that's all."

He nodded. "Things to do for your family?"

"Well, yes."

He nodded again. "So I guess Libby is right."

"Huh??"

He gently pushed my chin up, to close my mouth. He looked almost sad.

"Libby is right when she says that you aren't likely to leave your parents." He paused. "She's worried

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about you, Abby."

"But why?" I was starting to think that this was the weirdest conversation I had ever had.

"Because, as far as the people who care about you can see, you don't make your decisions based upon your needs. You make them based upon what you believe someone else needs." He walked away from me. His hand was on the door. He was leaving??

"Wait just a minute, here. What are you talking about? What is Libby talking about and what does it have to do with me and whether or not I am attracted to you?"

David just shook his head. "Invisible chains, Abby. You can't move on until you break free of the invisible chains." He spoke quietly, and turned and left.

Invisible chains? INVISIBLE CHAINS?? Had the world lost its collective mind? Is it a virus? My God, we were talking about a DREAM here!

Libby was worried about me, was she? Ha. *You don't make choices based upon your own needs...* What were they talking about? I make all of my decisions based upon my own needs. I mean, I decided to... well, there was the time I ...every day I...wait, what about when...? No.

Oh My God.

I couldn't think of single important decision that I had made in my life without consulting others, especially my parents. Me, the strong-minded career woman. What a joke.

Who was to blame? Not my parents. They weren't the kind of people that would shove their ideas down my throat. It wasn't their problem. The music in my head was making it difficult for me to think. I walked dazedly to the counter, trying to put things together mentally. Began preparing spaghetti sauce for dinner, but it seemed mechanical, as if by rote. Not like me.

I did stop myself from adding the blueberries, but not before I had opened the can, and so I had to start a dessert as well.

I'm not incapable. Add some peppers. *I can cook.* Stir in herbs. *Besides, if they don't like me the way that I am...* Right. Spices. Take a deep breath. Ah, that's better. I'm starting to feel better.

Who am I kidding? So I've never lived away from my folks. So what? I'm not missing out on anything much. Not really. Except a life. Fun. Freedom. Risk. Challenge.

David.

Oh, Lord. David. I had to talk to him. Now, right now. This needed to be settled.

I grabbed my raincoat. By now, it was raining steadily, with a sweet rhythm that I usually found comforting. But not tonight. I was suddenly beyond twitchy.

"Mom! Dinner's on the stove, I have to go out!" I hollered.

"Don't yell, dear. It's uncouth." she said serenely from right behind me.

I turned on her. "Mother, dearest. right now I really don't care if what I do is uncouth. I am going OUT!!" I nearly snarled the last word. She looked at me, startled. I have a quick temper, but not a bad one. Not usually. Oh, well. Today had been different in more ways than one. Things were going to change.

I am NOT incapable. I am NOT resistant to change...Oh, fine. I am resistant to change, but you show me the person who isn't, not even a little bit. I'll believe it when I see it. Why should it be me who has to change, anyway? Why not someone else? No-one else is perfect, either.

I banged on David's door. Thunder rolled overhead. By now I was furious and my feet were wet. I hate

wet feet. With a passion. I hammered again, even harder this time.

"David, OPEN THIS DOOR!"

My fist was balled up and raised to try again when the door swung wide open. David looked down at me, apparently baffled. Nice try, guy. I don't think so.

"Abby, why are you trying to break down my door?"

"What do you expect from me, David Weaver?"

"Excuse me?"

"What do you all expect from me? What do you want me to do??" I cried. I don't know if I was crying or just being rained on. I really didn't care. All I was sure of in this moment was that all of a sudden there was that same music pouring through my head, furious, ferocious, and unstoppable, and that the storm raging inside me rivaled the one I was standing in.

"Abby, come inside..." David was motioning me in.

"I don't want to come inside, dammit! Maybe I LIKE standing in the rain, David!" I was screaming at him to be heard. It wasn't like the neighbors could hear anything anyway. Storm clouds were gathering in David's Caribbean eyes. He was getting upset. Good, I wouldn't be the only one.

"You know what, Abby? I DON'T!" he responded angrily. "Why are you here anyway? To get me wet? To make sure I get the flu? What, aren't you going to be happy until I'm sick?"

"Oh, oh no you don't, David Weaver! You do NOT get to turn the tables on me. You have been really arrogant today, saying some rotten things. You have hurt my feelings, upset me, made me angry and yes, even miserable. You've accused me of some not very nice things, and you've made me ask questions about myself that quite frankly, I didn't want to ask! I DID NOT WANT THIS!!"

"Oh, that's surprising. First of all, I haven't said anything to you that wasn't true, rotten or otherwise, and you know it. Second of all, GOOD! It's

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about time something shook up your complacency! Go on, get angry, get upset. Just have some passion for something, for God's sake!"

"About time? ABOUT TIME?? What gives you the right to decide when the time is right for me to change my life or not as I see fit? What is so unnatural about the fact that I love and respect my family?"

He was holding me by the shoulders, shaking me. Neither one of us was paying any attention to the deluge we were in the middle of.

"This isn't about love, Abby! It's about fear, your fear of letting go. It's about never giving of yourself to your friends, about never giving me a chance, about never letting me near you! It's about US!"

"What ABOUT us, David?" I screamed right into his face. "You just started talking to me!"

"I have been talking to you for almost a year, Abby! I have been trying to get you to go out with me for at least six months, and the only time you really woke up to my existence is when I joined your carpool!"

Before I could challenge that one, lightning struck right behind us. At least, I *think* that's what happened. All I am certain of is that I felt electrified, the music in my head sang a note guaranteed to shatter glass, and David seemed to light up, glowing an eerie blue-white in front of me. Did I hit him? My arms did swing out, my feet left the ground, and the only reality was that David caught me and held me close to him. We stood there, barely breathing, and he held on to me in the middle of the storm.

We were both deafened. Neither one of us cared. We stayed there, in the pouring rain, oblivious to everything else. He was just staring at me, and I know I was staring at him. What had happened? There was a new and

blissful silence in my head: no more music. My world had narrowed to the blueness of his eyes.

He turned slowly and carried me into his house. I didn't care about any symbolism, I just knew beyond doubting that my knees were Jell-O and if he put me down, it was over.

He fished out a pair of dry sweats and socks for me to change into, wonderful man that he is. I had dry feet again. Wearily, I sat in front of a very cool fireplace and attempted to dry my hair. I'd seen David's house from the outside, of course, but I had never before come inside. I liked what I saw.

He came into the room carrying two steaming mugs. I took one from him. Mmmmmmm, hot chocolate. How did he know I was an addict?

"Libby told me that the one sure way to your heart was through chocolate," he smiled at me.

"Hey, despite what she may think, Libby does not know everything about me." I told him, somewhat indignantly. Maybe not, but she knew enough.

"She doesn't?"

"Nope." I smiled at him. He took a deep breath.

"So, what happens now? We seem to have passed a milestone out there in the storm, but has anything been resolved?"

I leaned into him. "I don't know. My family has been so much to me for so long, that I'm not sure I even know who I am without them. They're all I have ever had, all I've ever needed to feel a part of something. Does being independent mean divorcing myself from my parents, hurting them in any way? Because if it does, no matter what I feel for you, I am not prepared to do that."

He thought about it. Finally shaking his head, he spoke carefully.

"No. Independence is more internal than external. It's being aware of

who you are, being free mentally and emotionally to make your decisions, knowing what you want. It's being able to work for your dreams without feeling like you're ignoring someone else's. No guilt. It's ...acceptance."

I liked the fact that he thought before answering, not just jumping in with his opinion and advice.

Now it was my turn to muse. Acceptance. Freedom. No self-imposed guilt. Wow. What a concept.

"Knowing what I want, hmmm? I think I can do that."

David gently touched my face, then grinned impishly. "If you have any questions, I'm sure Libby will be happy to tell you what you want," he offered, trying to sound helpful and failing. I laughed.

His arm tightened around me when I looked into his eyes. I liked this.

"Well, it might take a while, but I think I can handle it. Can you?" I asked.

He nodded. "I've waited this long."

"You know something?" He waited. "I don't need Libby to tell me what I want." I smiled at him.

Looking as if he just couldn't help himself, David smiled back.

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After a long period of uncontrollable sobbing, Maureen Hardy sat in her car looking out at the waves of the ocean. With the late afternoon sun slowly setting in for the night, she stared into the waters, rightfully feeling sorry for herself as she pondered her life. "I'm twenty years old and already a widow," she said as the tears fell down her face. "It's just not fair! Six months we were married, and now he's gone. I just don't believe it, and I won't until they show me proof!"

Kyle and Maureen met when she was just nineteen. Kyle was ten years older than her and much more mature. "Love at first sight" was how they both described their feelings, and married nine months later, much to the dismay of Mrs. Green, Maureen's mom.

"You are too young to get married," she tried to warn. "You haven't started to live yet. Wait another year and see how you feel then."

But Maureen knew what she wanted and was not about to wait. Mrs. Green's main fear was that Maureen had never been independent, and she blamed both herself and her husband for that. They were always there for Maureen, never making her take care of things on her own, never allowing her to grow up. When she wanted to get married to the first real love of her life, they regretted their protectiveness of her.

Kyle, very lovable by nature, also let Maureen depend on him too much. She did not have to work, so she indulged her time taking a course at the local college. He hired a maid to clean the house once a week and had credit cards established in her name. He enjoyed taking care of his wife. But six months after they were married, Kyle, A.C.I.A. agent, was flying to Cuba when his plane disappeared from radar. No traces were ever found, and the plane was believed to have exploded while in flight. A search part was out of the question for two days due to Hurricane Bob, whose 120 mph winds made a search impossible. Kyle's plane left prior to the storm that was coming from the northeast, seemingly on tail, but the C.I.A. had a mission that had to be taken care of then, and Kyle flew off without question.

Two months later, Maureen sat in her car, feeling empty and despondent, losing herself in the memories her and Kyle had made together. She got out of the car and decided to go far a run on the empty beach.

"Kyle always wanted me to go jogging with him, but I never did. Now I wish I had jogged with you, Kyle," she thought with remorse. "Now I will run along the beach, and I will do this every day until you come back," she thought to herself. Starting out slow, Maureen increased her speed faster and faster until she felt her legs start to cramp beneath her, causing her to fall into the wet sand. Instead of getting up, she lay there crying, feeling helpless and angry. "Where are you, Kyle? Why don't you come home to me?"

A moment later, Maureen felt a strong, cool hand on

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her shoulder as a familiar voice called her name.

"Maureen. Stop crying, my darling. It's me, Kyle. Are you all right?"

Maureen could not believe her ears or her eyes as she quickly opened them to positively identify the face. As she looked into the deep brown eyes of the man she loved, Maureen threw her arms around Kyle and cried. "You are alive! Oh, Kyle, thank God. You are here!" Maureen was unaware of how much time passed before she could stop hugging and kissing her husband. Finally able to get her thoughts together, Maureen questioned him, not sure if she really cared what the answers would be, as long as they were together again. "Where have you been, my darling? Everyone thought you were dead. You have no idea what I have been going through without you!"

Kyle handed Maureen a white handkerchief that he had in his pocket, which made her chuckle out loud.

"No matter what the situation, no matter where we are, you always have a handkerchief ready for me when I need one," she said, wiping her tears.

"Yes, I do, my lover. Always one ready for you." Then more seriously, Kyle began to speak. "I have missed you too, my love. More than you know. I wanted to come to you sooner, but I was unable to. I will explain it all to you later. Now we have to get out of here. It is too chancy for me to be out in public. I came because I had to see if you were all right and because I knew you needed help. Come with me."

Maureen willingly took Kyle's hand and left the beach in a black car with tinted windows, driven by a chauffeur whose face she could not see behind the dark-glassed divider.

The Hardys arrived at an old, broken down house about two miles from the beach just as the moon was becoming visible. The car drove off as soon as Maureen and Kyle got out. They entered the house over wobbly, decayed wood which made up the porch, careful not to step in any of the holes in between the pieces. But once inside, Maureen stood in awe as she looked around and saw a beautifully decorated room with high ceilings, thick, gold-colored carpeting on the floor, the walls adorned with beautiful pictures. Over the mantel was a lantern which was glowing with enough light to illuminate the entire room. To the right of the mantel was a stairway which led to the upstairs rooms, Maureen assumed.

"We will be staying down here tonight, darling," Kyle told Maureen as she neared the staircase. "We won't be going upstairs at all, at least not tonight." Kyle came over and took Maureen in his arms and kissed her with a passion that, for two months she had been craving. He picked her up and carried her over to a bed, blanketed with red satin

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sheets, and lay down with her. His touch and the smell of his after shave overwhelmed Maureen's senses as she lay in her husband's safe arms, feeling warmth inside and while he caressed her body. They made love long into the night.

Feeling safe in his arms, Maureen decided it was time to talk and find out where her husband had been for the past months.

"Why didn't you call me and let me know you were okay? I have been walking around in circles since they told me you were killed. I didn't want to believe them, but everyone kept telling me to accept it, and I just couldn't find a way to do that. Oh, Kyle, I'm so glad you are here!"

"Maureen, my sweet, darling Maureen. I'm so sorry that you have to go through this. Remember when we decided to get married? We talked for hours about what could happen to me being in this line of work. I faced danger every day and could have been killed at any time." Kyle paused a moment, then said, "It was too much to ask you to be part of that life-style; I know that now. Your parents were right. You were not ready for marriage, especially one that could leave you a widow at any time. You're far too young to understand my line of work. You have always refused to accept the possibility of my death. And now, the life you once knew has changed and will never be the same again." Kyle's face was sad as he looked into Maureen's soft blue eyes. "I hope one day you will forgive me for subjecting you to..."

"What do you mean? Why was I not ready to be married to you? I just wasn't ready to have you die, that's all. I love you and that's all that matters. You're here, alive in my arms. That's all I care about," Maureen said, feeling very confused. "As long as we're together, everything is okay. Tell me we won't ever be apart again," Maureen said as the tears ran down her face.

Kyle looked into his child bride's face, feeling sorry for the hurt and pain that she was being asked to bear. "Things don't always go as we would like them to, Maureen. Sometimes, we have to accept what may seem unacceptable to our minds and our hearts. It is the only way that we can move on in life and grow into better human beings."

Maureen looked at Kyle curiously. "I don't know why you're talking like this, Kyle. It makes no sense. My fear was that you would be dead, and you're not. So I have nothing to bear or accept."

"Maureen, Kyle said with patience and determination. "What if my place did crash or if it had exploded? You can't avoid the truth if the facts are that I was killed. Wishing me alive is not going to bring me back."

"What are you talking about? Damn, Kyle, you're right here with me and you're okay. You're making me nervous." Tears were starting to form in Maureen's eyes.

"Tell me just one more thing, darling. Is my body not being found the only thing that kept you from believing that I could be dead?"

"No," Maureen quickly responded. "The fact that they could not find ANY evidence at all. No plane, no debris. NOTHING. The government officials told me that the storm may have washed away some parts of the plane, and the larger pieces could have sunk into the ocean during the storm. How could I believe them when my heart told me you were somewhere alive?" Then Maureen was angry and crying. "Stop torturing me with all these stupid questions. I don't want to hear this anymore."

"Shh, Darling," Kyle said in a calming voice as he held his wife closely. "Sleep now, and let me feel you in my arms while the moon is still in the sky and while we still have some time together."

Maureen tried, but she could not control the heavy feeling of exhaustion that came over her. Feeling the warmth of Kyle's face touching her face and listening to the sound of his heart beat put her into a sound sleep. When she awoke, she was alone in the bed where her and Kyle had been the night before, and the sun was shining brightly through the open draperies.

"Thank God, it wasn't just a dream," Maureen thought as she looked around the room. All was as she had remembered it. Kyle must be up all ready, she thought. He always was an early riser. Maureen got up and put on her clothes, neatly placed on a nearby chair. "Kyle," Maureen called as she headed for the stairs, only to catch a glimpse of her image in a mirror over the mantel. She looked more rested and like her old self than she had looked in months, she thought, then started to go up the stairs. Before she got to the third step, Kyle's voice made her turn around as he called her back.

"Maureen, wait. You can't go up there." Kyle sounded nervous for a moment, but was calm and caring as Maureen came back down and went to him.

Maureen went into his arms and held him close. "I woke up and you weren't there. For a moment, I thought that maybe I had imagined it, that you really were dead, and that I was crazy. Oh, Kyle, never leave me again. Please."

Kyle kept his arms around his wife for awhile, then pulled away, went to the window, and looked outside. Maureen came to his side to see what he was looking at. Outside was a field, barren except for a few cypress trees off to the right side of the house and an old weeping willow to the left. Maureen got an eerie feeling seeing these trees, remembering an old movie she recently saw on late night TV., where these trees embellished an old cemetery.

"I'm glad I didn't notice this view last night. It's pretty scary looking," Maureen said. She looked up at Kyle who had an intense look of sadness in his eyes. "Kyle, what's



wrong. Why do you look so sad?" She asked and put her arms around him. Kyle held her tightly for a quick moment, then kissed her passionately, knowing their time together was over.

"I have been trying to figure out the best way to handle this, darling. I have so little time, and it's imperative to both of us that we come to terms with the reality of the situation."

"Kyle, what do you mean? What reality? What are you talking about?" Maureen was once again unnerved by his words. Again, she went to go into his arms, to find her safe place there with him, but Kyle softly moved her back so that they were face to face.

"Maureen, I have to leave you now. Where I'm going, you can't come. I must go alone." He watched as the tears started to fall down her face. "I'm so sorry that you have to go through this. I am. If I could be here for your always, I would. But this isn't possible."

"Maureen looked at her husband in disbelief. "You're going? Going where? You can't leave me again. I won't let you. How can you say you're leaving?" Maureen was nervous as well as angry with Kyle.

"I'm leaving you because I have to. I want you to understand." Kyle started to walk away, unable to find the right words to soothe his wife.

"I'll come with you, Kyle. If it's a secret mission, I won't get in the way. I promise. Just let me come with you." Maureen's childlike qualities were trying to hang on. She was feeling desperate as a voice inside of her questioned the reality of what was going on. Maureen went up to Kyle who still had his back to her. "Look at me," she yelled in anger.

He turned to look at her when she slapped him hard across his face as her anger took over. She screamed at him. At that moment, Maureen felt a change come over her, as she felt capable of expressing her feelings more clearly than she had ever been able to in her life. She began to cry into the handkerchief from her pocket.

"Listen to me, Maureen," Kyle said, unaffected by the slap. "I left you two months ago, not by choice, but by fate. You must let go now, because it's time to say good-bye. We were granted this one last night together, in hopes that I could help you realize that I would not be returning to you now, or ever in this lifetime. I'll always be here in your heart, but that's where it ends. Our physical life together was beautiful, but it's over. You must let go of me, so I can rest, and your heart may eventually find the peace it needs to move on. Please say you understand."

Maureen held her head as intense pain stung her forehead. "I don't want to go on without you, Kyle," she muttered as the room began to slowly spin. "I love you." Maureen reached out to touch him, but he was no longer near enough to feel.

"Wait," Maureen tried to call out, as she watched Kyle

Goodbye My Love

pick up the lantern on the mantel and slowly start to ascend the forbidden staircase. Her head spun faster. The last line from Led Zeppelin's song, "Stairway to Heaven" played softly in her mind.

"Good-by, my love," were the last words Maureen heard from Kyle, as his image faded, and she felt herself falling into the darkness.

Maureen was awakened by the cold, ocean water that was washing over her face and body. Slowly, she rose, feeling a lump on her head, recalling that she had been running, then remembering she had fallen down. She looked around and saw that the sun was fading into the evening, while a full moon was on the rise. Remembering what had taken place, Maureen sat on the beach, allowing the tide to run over her body, while she attempted to make sense of the dream she just had, if it really were a dream.

"It seemed so real," she said out loud, as she recalled every detail in her foggy mind. She looked out across the ocean, uncertain if she had been dreaming. "Did I really have a meeting with Kyle?" She questioned. She got up and walked back to her car, feeling numb. Once inside, she started it, and the radio came on with the engine's roar.

"The C.I.A. has confirmed that the wing of a plane found by Cuban fishermen early today is that of their missing aircraft lost two months ago. It appears to have been in an explosion, as initially believed."

Maureen shut off the radio, as well as the car, and tried to get her thoughts together. Kyle asked me what it would take to get me to believe he was dead, she remembered as the tears fell down her cheek. Feeling a bulge in her pocket, Maureen pulled out the handkerchief, and sobbed wildly with the realization that she was indeed, a widow. She thought back on her last encounter with Kyle, believing in her heart that it was real and knowing it had been an experience she needed and was grateful for.

She got out of the car and went back to the spot where she had fallen. "It won't be easy getting over you, Kyle, but I'll try.

As she watched the tide come in, she tossed the handkerchief into the water and watched as it was pulled out to sea. Maureen turned and started back to her car, ready to face Kyle's death, knowing it was time to grow up and leave false hopes behind.

"Good-by, my love," she whispered and headed for home.

BARBARA DUFFY

I watched the sun as it set into the desert horizon like an immense fiery jewel embedding itself into an earthly crown. As it slowly sank further down, I scanned the rest of my surroundings. The shadows cast by distant canyons evaporated like ink spots into the sand. Darkness awakened from its deep slumber and stretched across the sky. As I watched the gradual transition from blue to black, the stars began to appear overhead. I gazed in reverence, though I'd watched this scene unfold many evenings since early childhood. But this night was different. For the first time in my life I bore witness to a comet streaking its way into oblivion.

My name is Eric E. Yellowstar. I've lived here in Arizona all my twenty-three years; on the outskirts of a Navajo reservation in Chinle. I am proud to possess the general characteristics and physical appearance of my ancestral lineage. I am tall and athletic with reddish-brown skin and long black hair, yet my clothes distinguish me as being unmistakably modern.

My mother died at the time of my birth; leaving me to grow up with only my father. I never knew much about her, because my questions were always left unanswered. Eventually, I felt obligated to stop pressing the issue. My father was a "code talker" for the Marine Corps during World War II. This means that he used our native Navajo language as a sort of radio code with other Navajo men stationed elsewhere who received the messages and translated them for the white soldiers. This is just one way that white society contradicted itself; they used their educational system as a way to dissipate our language and culture while permitting it only to serve their needs.

As far as I am concerned, I was forced to go to school. I did graduate from high school, despite my choosing to reject some aspects of what they taught. I haven't given much consideration to college. I feel that my real education came from countless hours of research at the public library. I learned much

Desert Blues

about the history and culture of my people among many other things. The library became a necessity in my search for knowledge.

Aside from the library, I've also learned much over the years from a wise old woman named Silver Fire. As a child, I would venture out to her home and she would teach me the ways of our ancestors. I learned about their beliefs and traditions, and this knowledge affected me deeply. Silver Fire was named so because of her wild, unkempt silver hair and her flaming temperament. She also knew much about using plants for medicinal purposes.

It was only a night ago that my life took a drastic turn and proceeded in an unforeseen direction. It was dusk, and I was preparing to end a day's work in the cornfields. I was just preparing to leave when my boss approached me. "Eric, I'd like to have a word with you." As he spoke, I couldn't help but smell booze as it reeked from his mouth. It reminded me of my father; an alcoholic. And his words served only to reinforce this comparison, "You can't leave yet. I still need you here. I have other work that needs to be done tonight." I began thinking about all the times I'd helped this man; sometimes single-handedly keeping his crops in good shape for the seasons. I also thought about how useless it was to even try to reason with him. "It's an unfortunate circumstance," I retorted.

My ancestors migrated here from the far north. They acquired agricultural skills from the Pueblos and livestock from the Spanish colonists. In time, Mexico ceded this land to the United States and the white settlers began arriving. They drove out many Navajos who in turn found shelter in caves among the canyons. Nowadays, we Navajos live on reservations that the government has granted us. And here I am tending crops so

that I can earn enough wages to simply live. "Well, you can work all night for all I care," said after a moment of thought. "I think you need some time alone to recognize the error of your ways."

"You can't just leave me like this!" he exclaimed when he realized that I was resisting him. I turned away and began to walk home; his voice trailing off until it sounded like nothing more than an insect buzzing in the distance.

I arrived home about thirty minutes later only to discover that my father was lying on the floor. My father and I live in a "hogan", which is a hut made of mud and wood. I looked down at my father, a man defeated: living off of government grants on a reservation and having constant bouts with alcoholism. I was ashamed to see my father admitting defeat to the forces in his life, much like our ancestors succumbed to the rapidly growing America. I nudged my fallen father with the toe of my boot. He opened his eyes and moaned for a few minutes before attempting to stand up. "Eric," he said emphatically. "It's good to see you."

I stood there silently debating the authenticity of this statement before finally replying, "It's good to be home, father. Now I don't suppose dinner's waiting in the kitchen?"

"I'm an ill man," my father replied defensively. "Things have been difficult since your mother died."

"Who was she?" I demanded. "I've never so much as seen a photograph of her." As I anticipated a response I felt a chill creep up my spine as if to prepare me for something unexpected.

After a long pause, my father finally confided. "Your mother's name was Ann. When I met her she had just moved from California. I was wary of marriage because she was white, but I loved her so much. She developed pneumonia before you were born; her pregnancy only complicated things more. I feared losing both of you. We were told that she had a better chance of recovering if she chose not to have you. She refused to give you up,

and died shortly after your birth." Tears began to well up in my eyes and my father diverted his attention. I needed time alone to regain composure, so I went outside. In solitude I wept.

I slept in the desert that night. I've always found peace alone in the desert. I dreamed vividly about Silver Fire. It was as if she were beckoning me; almost challenging me to visit her. It has been five years since I last saw her. Upon awakening at dawn, I ate corn bread that I had brought with me. My hunger being satiated, I meandered for a while in the desert. I thought about what my father had told me the previous night. I grew up imagining my mother to be a Navajo; I never suspected that the world I detached myself from was, quite literally, a part of me. Regardless of my initial shock and disbelief, I understood my father's plight. I too was once in love. I met her during our last year in high school. She took a great interest in me right from the start, mainly because she was studying anthropology. She was always eager to learn more about my native culture, and we often spent long evenings discussing and debating many topics and enjoying each other's company. I had an uncanny affinity for her fair skin and blue eyes. Although neither of us acknowledged it, we both knew that our relationship would not last. Her unapproving parents urged her to go to an out of state college. Thus she left, and for many nights I grieved. It was Silver Fire who consoled me in those days.

As I was venturing through the desert lost in thought, I suddenly realized that something was awry. To the east of where I stood I could see a small encampment in the distance. I decided to investigate and began walking towards the tent. As I approached, a man came out of the tent and leered in my direction.

"What the hell do you want?" he remarked bitterly. "Don't you know this is private property?"

Here before me stood a man who obviously wanted to drive me out of the safest place I knew. "This

Desert Blues

land has been a home to me all my life," I responded. "Why do you claim to own it?"

"Because I bought it. I can develop this place into the next Las Vegas." I managed to stifle my rage and struck out only with words. "You can't own this or any land for that matter," I told him. "If you try to dominate nature, then eventually you will find that you are alone and dying, much like the trees that are cut down and the air that is polluted."

"You had better leave," the man interjected. "At once!"

I kicked a hole in the man's tent and trudged onward. I walked for an hour until I reached a familiar area, as dusk was now settling in. I built a fire and slowly drifted off to sleep. Once again Silver Fire appeared to me in my dream-state. I felt drawn to her. Also in this dream, I saw myself as a child. I was dancing intently to a steady drum rhythm, and there were apparitions dancing with me.

I woke the following morning drenched in a cold sweat. This time I could not ignore the lucid meaning of my dreams. I knew I needed to visit with Silver Fire. I hastily walked to her home in the canyons. She still lived alone in a cave, because she could not bear to leave her family, who were all buried within the caves. I arrived by early afternoon and entered her abode. It was dark inside; when my eyes adjusted to the light I was startled to see Silver Fire standing directly in front of me.

"I've been expecting you, Eric," she said as she hugged me. "I'm glad you had enough sense to come see me."

I told her about everything that had been happening; and when I mentioned the man I encountered in the desert, her eyes lit up. "Yes, I know of him," she explained. "That is why I wanted to speak with you. You see, the desert is considered to be part of

the reservation. There are burial grounds and other sacred places contained within. You must let this be known to the government." We talked on into the night catching up on each other's lives. I left at daybreak to embark on my journey into American civilization. I found myself in the midst of strange buildings and sights that I was unaccustomed to. I reached the local police station and held my breath as I walked in. I was reluctant to seek their help, but preserving the land made it all worthwhile. After an hour or so of being questioned ruthlessly at the police station, I was permitted to leave. I was unsure of what to do next, since they told me that an investigation was being prepared. I decided to return home.

When I woke up the next day, I felt renewed. I went to work and had a long talk with my boss. We agreed to write up a contract in which our individual duties would be specified. At home, I convinced my father to keep himself occupied by taking up silversmithing. This way instead of drinking all day, he could make and sell crafts in town.

About a week later, while I was at work, I happened to glance at my boss' newspaper. On the front page was a large headline that stated boldly "Renowned Tycoon Arrested in Desert Embezzlement." The article told of how an investigation led to the arrest of the man I had encountered in the desert. I knew the desert was once again safe, but there was no mention of my ordeals in the newspaper. The police took the credit for the whole thing, I thought. Then I looked at the photograph just below the headline. It was a panoramic view of the desert and it showed the tycoon being led away by two police officers. And in the distance stands a lone, proud onlooker. I immediately recognized myself in the picture and smiled, for I knew that no matter what the article stated; my presence would be unavoidable.

JEFF ANDREWS





Inner Journey

The landscape stretched before you
Is clear, the colors true,
Yet seen through eyes of anger
Will just distort the view.

The mountain's rugged beauty
Includes both lows and highs,
With jagged edges cutting
Far up through bright blue skies.

In life we fall in valleys
Where wind moans low and cries,
The darkness then surrounds you
It's here that courage dies.

Don't focus on the shadows
The evil's in your mind,
To stare into the darkness
Will only make you blind.

And when your doubts engulf you
Just stand and face your fear,
Don't run from your own conflict
It always follows near.

Great cliffs hang over vastness
The edge from which you shrink
Is where you'll find perspective
Step right out to the brink.

The questions seem so endless
Each day they start anew,
And you must seek the answers
Deep down inside of you.

For on this inner journey
You'll struggle and you'll fight,
But only you can choose now
Which path is wrong or right.

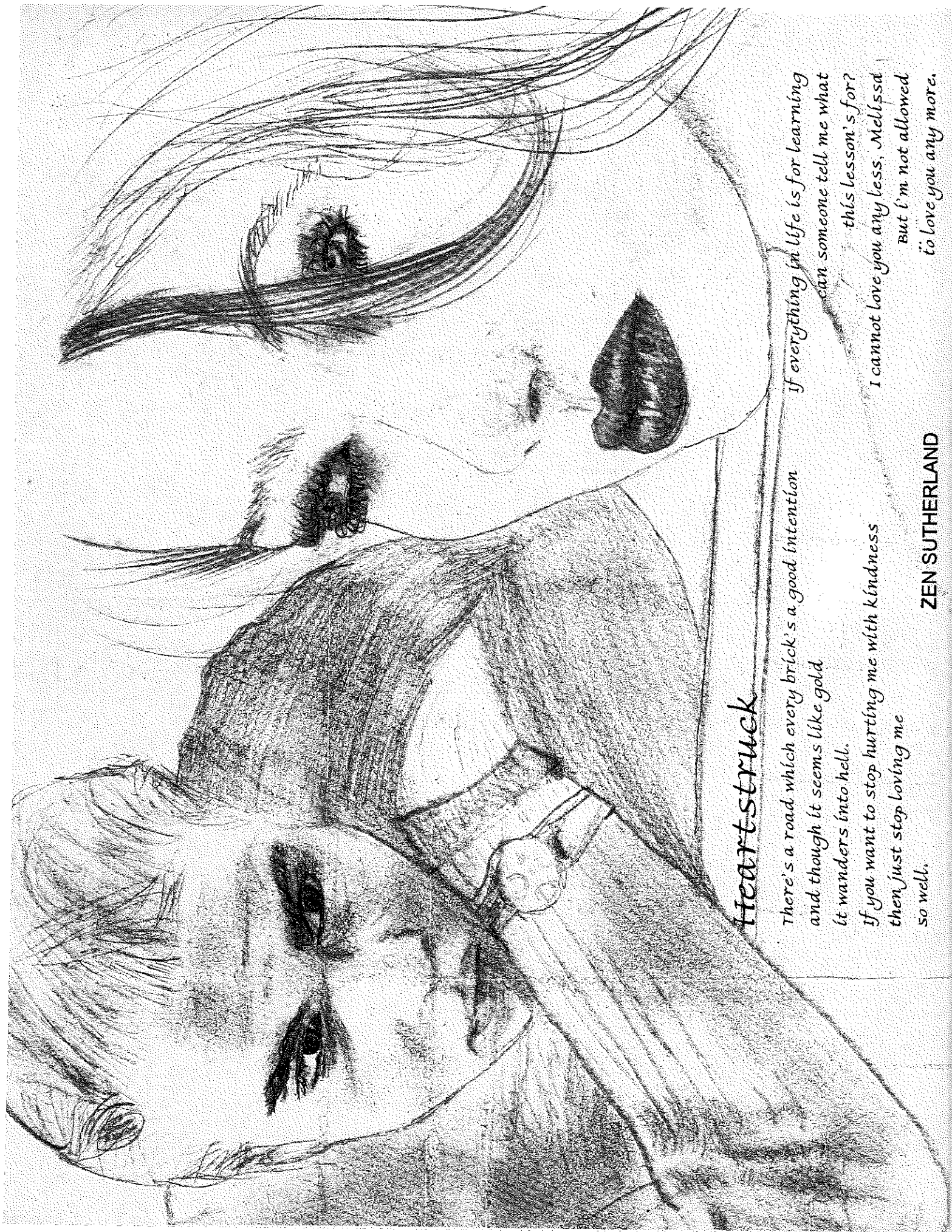
Don't falter at the crossroads
The never ending choices,
Be still and listen closely
To quiet inner voices.

For once you stop the running
The pounding of your feet,
Your heart will find the rhythm
The subtle primal beat.

Look now to inner vision
The mind will tell no lies,
Your heart and soul will guide you
To see, just close your eyes.

It's here you'll find direction
And wander lost no more,
Set free the light within you
And feel your spirit soar.

ELLIE SHUFF



Heartstruck

There's a road which every brick's a good intention
and though it seems like gold
it wanders into hell.

If you want to stop hurting me with kindness
then just stop loving me
so well.

If everything in life is for learning
can someone tell me what

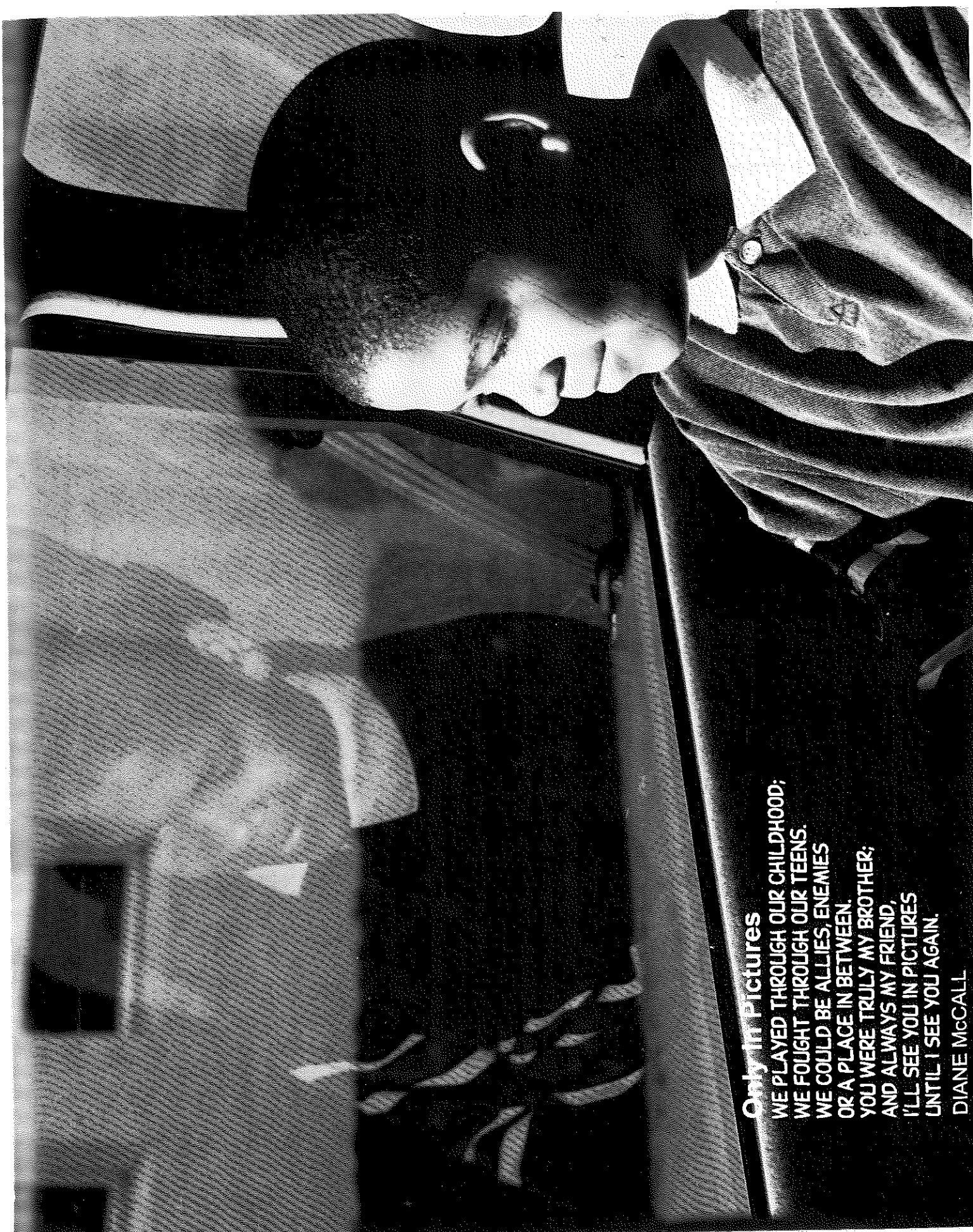
this lesson's for?

I cannot love you any less, Melissa

But I'm not allowed

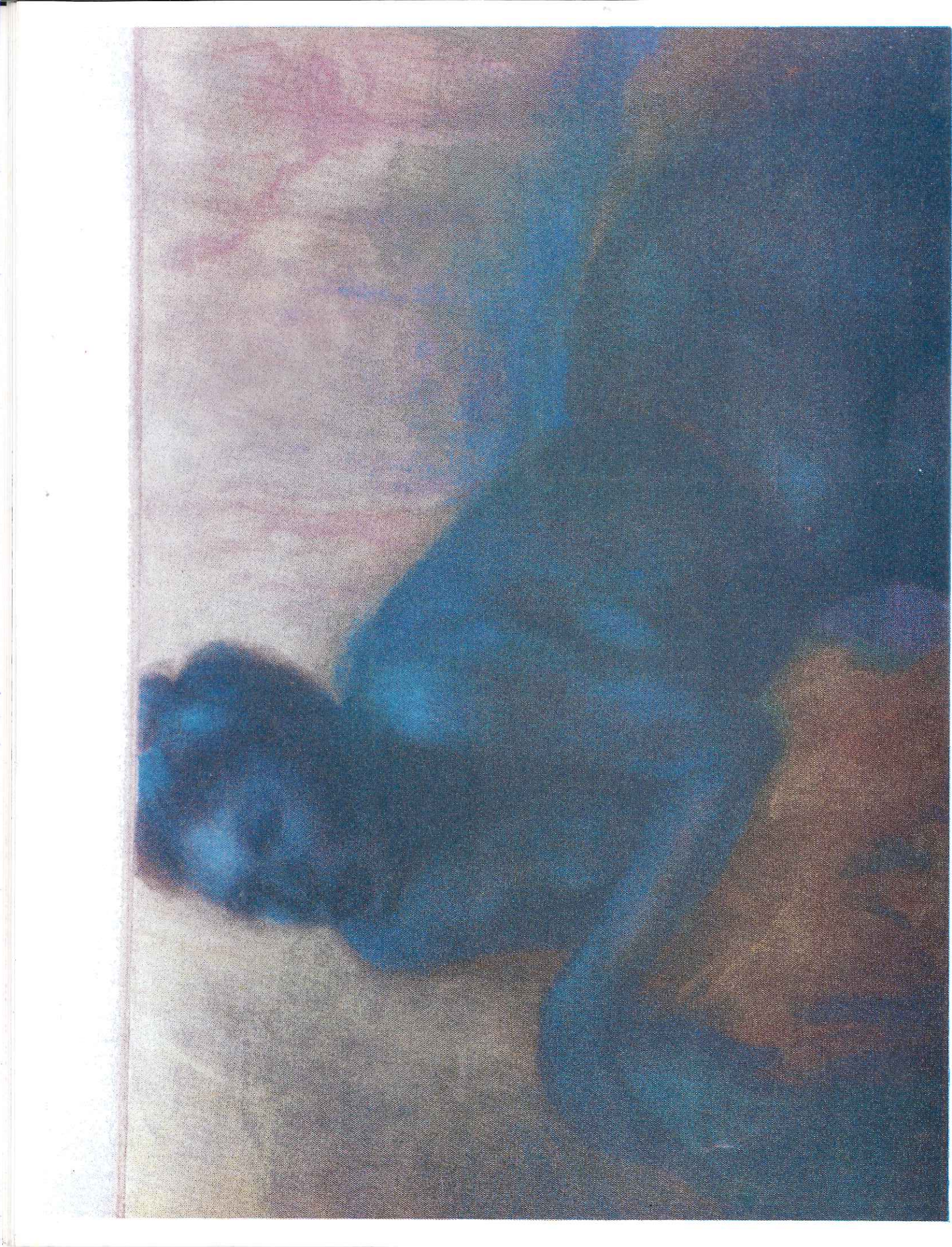
to love you any more.

ZEN SUTHERLAND



Only in Pictures
WE PLAYED THROUGH OUR CHILDHOOD;
WE FOUGHT THROUGH OUR TEENS.
WE COULD BE ALLIES, ENEMIES
OR A PLACE IN BETWEEN.
YOU WERE TRULY MY BROTHER;
AND ALWAYS MY FRIEND,
I'LL SEE YOU IN PICTURES
UNTIL I SEE YOU AGAIN.

DIANE McCALL



She

represented the fire in the

darkest cave

a drop of potency

etching a grave

Drumbeat sly and

surely clothed

Echoed

round this

luring cove

in which her sacred dance

did die

and soil and sand became

the sky

A blazing wreath

of snarling heat

pulling at our feet

Turning and twisting

the steps of old

as we hold

and hold

and hold

onto our virgin crone

our princess bride

with moonlite eyes

Surviving at last

releasing the past

under our fretful tears

and biting years

our frowns

did drown

(The earth is still warm)

DANEA C. LEIGH



BLUE PLANET

I beheld the world below
Perfect and small and round
As blue as a baby's eye

And standing alone on this dusty barren rock
I saw for the first time our home
As delicate and fragile as a teardrop

No longer a cold experiment
Of science and technology
And reason

But deep blue seas and swirling white clouds
Lush green folds of land and hill
And snow capped peaks dabbled in purples and indigos

And just as I realized all we had been given
In this precious blue planet
Electric yellow flashes exploded soundlessly across its face

Frothy light clouds tarnished dim
Rich emerald forest shriveled brown
Aquamarine seas stained maroon

And as the voice in my helmet went dead
I shed a tear for the death
Of this helpless defeated child

None of us ever knowing
That without a child

There is no future...

BY TOM MANNARINO

Heartland

Dreaming of the land
that bore me
bringing me to the place,
Where the moon hangs low
and the sun burns bright.
Breathing the sweet air
my questions
become answers.

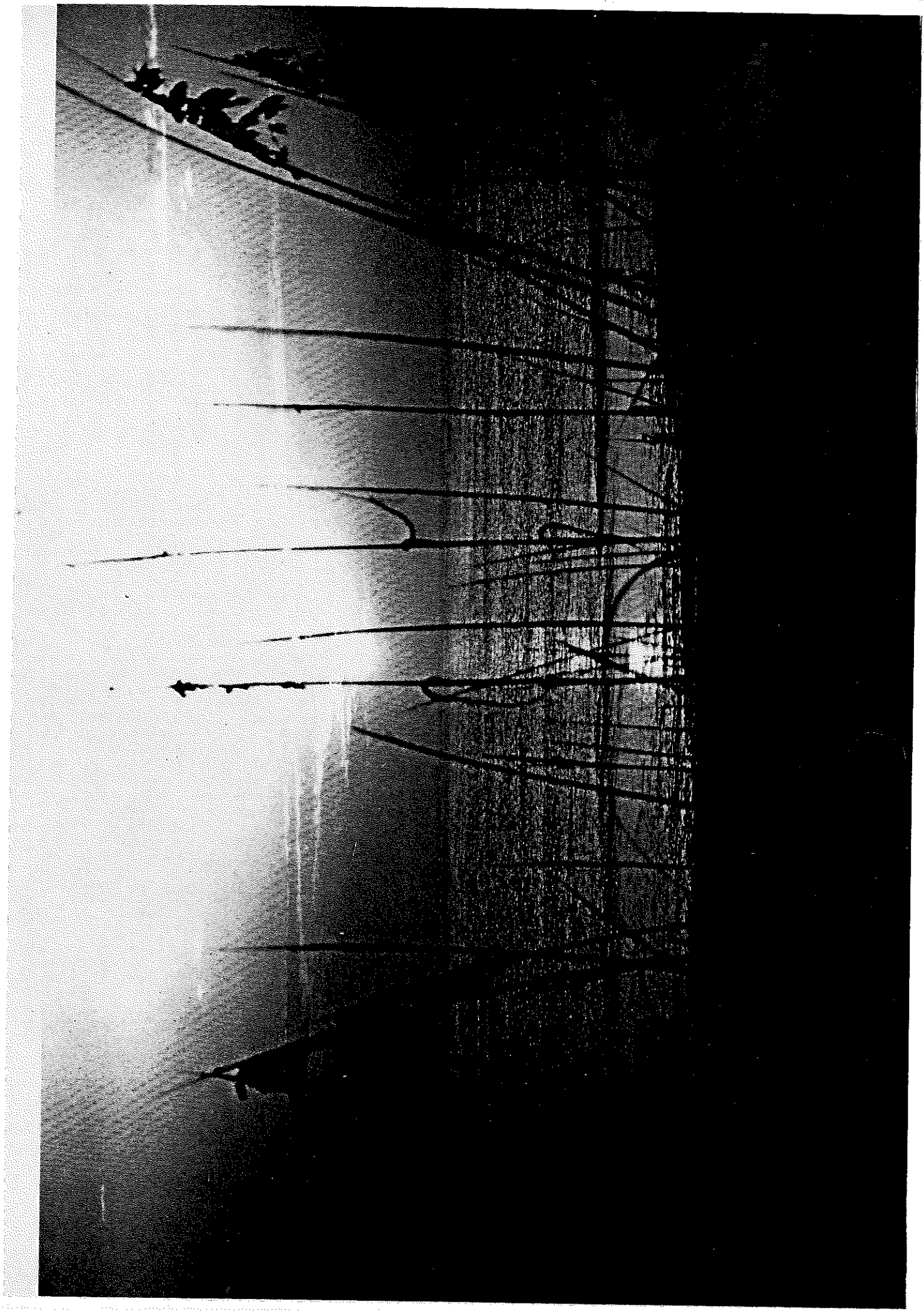
Peacefully still,
the palm trees tower
and the birds begin to sing
The eternal circle moves
silently,
The clouds float gently,
in the sky

which encompasses the World.
The wind that brings the heat
of another lifetime.
Energy clashes with the
power of light
the growls of the Gods
immediately follow.

The Earth glows
with anticipation,
as the rain begins to fall.
Washing away the memories
of pains from another land

Accepted,
my soul has found
its heart.

DAWN VIBERT



POETRY'S BIRTH

The snow-white ocean foam flies like soap suds through the air
to land on sea oats and water drenched beaches
only to evaporate and be gone forever.

How alike the foam is, to the words, the poems
that flash through my mind so quickly...

I chase you, words, but you evade me,
just like the snow-flake foam is caught by the wind
and lightly dances on the top of the blue-green waves
out of my reach or merges with the shore
to melt into the tiny sand granules below my feet.
Even if I catch you, poetry and try to hold you in my hand
for a portion of a second, like the sea's froth
you disappear into nothingness right before my eyes.

Muse, you are the inspirer of song and poetry.
Can you bring me the words like the ocean
pours its waves upon the shore—
crashing, loud, boisterous and bold, full of energy and might?
Don't hold back, keeping life and imagination from me,
for I want to soar like the pelicans through the clouds
and dive into the depths of the ocean with their certitude
to discover the food of the soul that waits below the surface.

Nourish me with your words, poetry,
with the creative spark my heart needs to ignite into full bloom.
Speak through me as the wind speaks through the palms —

softly, melodiously, wistfully,
Come to me, words, and create an ever-changing dance
across the stark fields of my mind.

Gently place sea flowers throughout my golden hair
and drape my body with the effervescent robe
of sea foam and diamond stardust, letting Aphrodite's words
whisper love songs upon the pages of my heart.

No longer hide from me on the edge of the horizon always beyond my reach.
Instead break through in a burst of sunset prisms
of apricot oranges, burgundy rose and sea blue.

In an explosion of light, paint yourself
dramatically, mysteriously, exquisitely on the palette of my soul.

I await you, poem, enthusiastically, expectantly.....
you who are yet to be born, I await you.

SUSAN J. BARROW